

POLICY-MAKING IN A TRANSFORMATIVE STATE

THE CASE OF QATAR

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Chapter 6

Fragmentation and Continuity in Qatar's Urbanism:

Toward a Hub Vision

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In the past two decades Doha has witnessed enormous urban growth driven by various projects and strategies, which were launched to realise the vision of a hub city within international networks. Successively, the increasing investments in combination with liberalisation strategies have affected the decentralisation of urban governance, while dramatically transforming Doha's urban structure and built environment. This chapter explores the recent developments in Qatar's "urbanism". The impact of large-scale investments of oil and gas revenues on urbanism in Qatar's capital city Doha is discussed to offer insights into recent developments by adopting a multi-layered methodological approach that includes two major components. The first is a series of interviews with experts and planners working on strategies and plans within the public sector, while the second is a review of recently published data and figures regarding investments in relation to positioning Doha as future "hub city". The methodology helps identify investment strategies and aspects of decentralised urban governance within which urban development is undertaken. The chapter concludes with a brief on how a new form of urban governance may enable the effective implementation of a hub vision in the case of Qatar.

Introduction

Since the middle of the 20th century, increasing oil production has generated rapid urbanisation on the Arabian Peninsula, which has led to newly emerging cities along the Gulf coast. While the Emirate of Dubai and the Kingdom of Bahrain established more diversified local economies due to their limited hydrocarbon resources, other GCC states relied extensively on oil and natural gas development after their national independence in the 1970s (Scholz, 1999: 69). In the case of Qatar, a rapid transformation process was undertaken, which in turn led to extensive immigration. Subsequently, the population of its capital city Doha increased from less than 400,000 inhabitants in 1995 to more than 2 million today (Qatar Statistics Authority, 2015).

Based on a fortunate geopolitical location between Asia, Europe and Africa, Qatar's leadership recognised a potential to develop its capital city into a hub within regional and global business networks by investing in extensive state-of-the-art harbours and airports (Salama and Wiedmann, 2013: 34). The global hub vision is rooted in the increasing competition between cities worldwide to attract the headquarters of key advanced producer services and high-tech branches (Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1997). Therefore decision makers in emerging countries, such as Qatar, are challenged to balance between implementing consolidation strategies and reinforcing fast growth mechanisms. While the investment driven sector needs to be attracted by a deregulated and dynamic environment, other regulations have to be enforced in order to enable a more sustainable urban development attracting the long-term commitment of businesses and their highly qualified migrant workers.

Coupled with this general hub vision, different types of investments were introduced in order to accelerate Doha's urban growth. As a result, new economic sectors have emerged through joint ventures between public and private sectors, which required a new era of urban

governance in Qatar. Privatisation and decentralisation have been integrated to stimulate and accelerate investment in order to realize the vision of becoming an emerging regional centre. This vision implies the development of new socio-economic realities and takes little account of existing conditions. Today, hydrocarbon wealth can still be considered the main basis of recent expectations for urban growth in Qatar (Qatar Statistics Authority, 2015). The newly applied investment strategies however, differ from the previous development model during the 1970s and 1980s of establishing a rentier state (see discussion of rentier state theory in Chapter 3). Thus, the new urban development era in Qatar and the Gulf region as a whole can be described as a decisive transition phase from oil driven urbanization and modernization, towards the creation of dynamic service hubs driven by the general vision of a shrinking dependency on fossil fuels in a post-oil future.

Despite parallels or similarities with other emerging cities, Qatar's capital Doha should be considered a particular case, not only because of its fast urban growth in recent years but also because of its political realities wherein traditional forms of urban governance meet a modern administration (Gardner, 2014: 354). The ruling family became the visionary force introducing various strategies to transform Doha into a regional and global hub city. These strategies included a strong advocacy of investing oil and gas revenues in large-scale projects, while establishing new organisations in order to create a suitable environment for an expanding private sector. In this respect, semi-public holdings were often introduced to develop profit-oriented subsidiaries in various economic sectors, which accelerated growth by stimulating markets. Thus, it can be argued that government investments were in most cases catalysts of recent economic diversification processes, which were usually accompanied by the deregulation of markets, for example, the real estate market (Fox, Mourtada-Sabah, Al-Moutawa, 2006: 8).

General economic visions are being put into place by adopting various strategies for investments and liberalisation policies. Urban planning however has faced the challenge of guiding the recent construction boom in Qatar into a functioning urban structure. The idea of developing the capital city of a former administrative centre of a rentier state into an emerging service hub resulted in large-scale projects and a new form of decision-making in physical planning processes. The previous centralised process of defining land use has been partially substituted by the master plans of developers for “city-within-a-city” projects, which usually occupy a large portion of new urban areas. The resulting urban structure can be described best as a patchwork of various developments connected by macro-infrastructure projects that are typically carried out by the public sector. Thus, the economic vision of creating hubs has led to a process of morphological transformation and resulted in a new city with new identities. The dynamics between investing oil and gas revenues in key development strategies and the liberalisation of local markets have changed urban governance from a centralised administration into a multi-layered cooperation between various stakeholders (Wiedmann, 2012: 218).

A Methodological Approach: Exploring Qatar’s Urbanism

We introduce Qatar’s capital city Doha in order to illustrate how the hub city vision is realised in the form of large-scale investments, as well as how urban governance is affected by deregulation and an emerging private and semi-public sector. Our approach seeks to offer insights into the way in which urban structure and the overall built environment have been transformed by this new way of conceiving the potential of urbanisation in the Doha by various decision makers. Using a multi-layered methodology, the chapter is based on a series of face-to-face interviews with ten planning authorities involved in elaborating and implementing the new Qatar National Master Plan.

The interviews were undertaken over a concentrated period and used a matrix of a limited number of key questions (see Figure 6.1). The ten interviewees were selected according to their role in developing and implementing strategies and plans at the Ministry of Municipalities and Urban Planning (MMUP). The major aim of the interviews was to explore various investment strategies that have been launched to transform Doha into a hub city, as well as to identify the key factors that led to a decentralised type of urban governance. Moreover, it aims at recognizing the consequences of these strategies and their impact on the urban structure of the city in order to identify the key challenges for urban sustainability in the future.

The s interviews were followed by a questionnaire in which the ten interviewees were asked in a second round to identify and rate the most important investments and decentralisation factors within urban governance. Additionally, they were asked to rate the most significant consequences for contemporary urban morphologies. A five-point scale was utilized in this procedure where 1 represents least important and 5 represents most important.

Figure 6.1: Interview Questions

I. Large Scale Investments
1. What investments were carried out by the public sector over the last 15 years?
2. Which public organisation is behind these investments?
3. What are the particular projects within each investment sector?
4. What projects are currently being invested in?
II. Urban Governance
1. How has urban governance transformed since the 1990s?

2. What were the causes of the decentralisation process of urban governance?
3. How is urban governance currently being restructured?
III. Urban Morphologies
1. What are the main characteristics of Doha's contemporary urban structure?
2. Which of these characteristics were a result of the recent construction boom?
3. What are the main challenges of contemporary urbanism in Qatar?

Creating a Global Hub in Doha

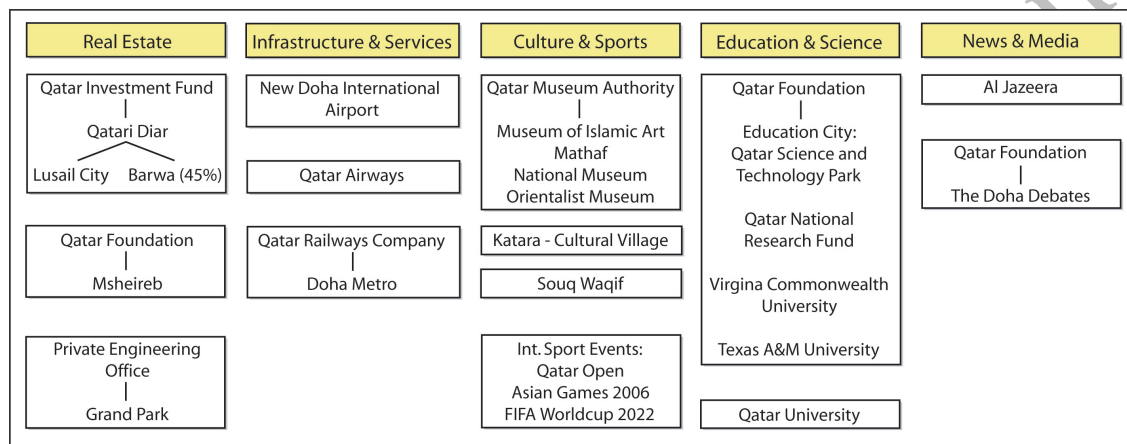
The change in Qatar's rulership in 1995 with Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani opened the door to a new path of economic development for what was a restrictive and conservative country (Scholz, 1999: 185). Qatar has developed into a rising political centre in the Middle East, claiming the role as inter-mediator within relationships between the West and Arab World, which was, for instance, expressed in fora such as the Doha Debates (The Doha Debates, 2015). Coupled with its growing political engagement, various projects were launched to develop the capital city Doha into a regional service hub. Since the mid-1990s Qatar's overall population has more than tripled to more than 2 million inhabitants, making it one of the fastest growing nations in the world.

This rate of population growth is largely due to the recent construction boom that incited the immigration of hundreds of thousands of guest workers from South Asia (Naqy, 2006).

Almost 90 per cent of Qatar's current population lives in Doha and its metropolitan area (Qatar Statistics Authority, 2015). Liberalisation mechanisms have been introduced by deregulating the real estate market through the Foreign Ownership of Real Estate Law in 2004 (Colliers

International, 2008). The interest from the private sector in investing in the capital city was however mainly ignited by direct investments of oil and gas revenues, which can be categorized in terms of real estate, infrastructure and services, culture and sports, education and science, and media (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2: Five Main Categories of Investment



Source: Authors.

Real estate Investments

While the Qatar Foundation was established for the main purpose of investing oil and gas revenues in the development of society, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) was founded in 2005 for the purpose of investing sovereign wealth funds in international markets as well as in local sectors such as the upcoming real estate market. The real estate boom in Qatar began in 2004 when the large-scale revenues from liquefied natural gas exports were invested in major urban developments in Doha. These investments were accompanied by the Foreign Ownership of Real Estate Law, which enabled the sale of freehold properties to international investors in designated areas (Colliers International, 2008). In order to accommodate the increasing interest in real estate investment, the QIA was put in charge of the Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment

Company, which was founded in 2004 as a property investment fund and is responsible for several real estate projects (Qatar Investment Fund, 2012). It is currently in charge of the Doha Exhibition Centre and a mixed-use project in Ras Al Khor in addition to its signature project – the Lusail City development (Qatari Diar, 2011). In addition to Qatari Diar's function of founding subsidiaries such as Lusail Real Estate Development Company to carry out projects as master developer, it holds 45 per cent of the shares in Barwa, the largest listed real estate company in Qatar (Barwa, 2011). The large-scale involvement of the public sector in the real estate market in the form of either Qatari Diar, a state-owned real estate investor, or as the main shareholder of other companies, has attracted the private sector to join the expanding construction business. Due to this large-scale involvement of the public sector and its oil and gas revenues, the international financial crisis in 2008 has had less impact on the dynamics of local real estate markets in Qatar than in neighbouring countries.

Infrastructure and Services

In order to become a global hub, large investments were made to expand the existing airport and harbour as well as to develop new facilities. Since the end of the 1990s passenger movement has accelerated from around just 2 million to more than 15 million passengers a year at the Old Doha International Airport, which, in spite of its many extensions in recent years, was beyond the projected capacity of 12 million (Doha International Airport, 2011). Thus, a new airport development project was launched in 2004, with estimated funds of over USD11 billion, on a reclaimed area of 890 hectares to the east of the existing runways. The new Hamad International Airport was in partial operation at the end of 2013, and its first phase opened with full capacity in 2014. After the completion of its last phase in 2020, it will have reached an expected annual capacity of around 50 million passengers (Salama and Wiedmann, 2013: 92).

Parallel to this large-scale investment in a new airport, Qatar Airways, one of the fastest growing airlines in the world, is directly funded by the state with the aim of becoming one of the world's leading aviation providers (Centre for Aviation, 2011). Notably, these investments have turned Qatar into a serious future competitor as a transit hub for passengers and cargo beyond the Gulf region itself. In addition to aviation it has been declared that more than USD100 billion will be invested in building an efficient local infrastructure in Doha during the next 12 years (MENANN, 2011). One of the main projects in this regard is an ambitious metro project that is being developed incrementally in various phases with expected dates of completion in 2019 and 2026 (Qatar Rail, 2015).

Culture and Sports

Due to the fact that Doha was a rather insignificant settlement before oil and gas production and that its traditional buildings were replaced in the 1950s and 1960s during the first phase of modernisation, its potential for hosting international tourism has been rather low. In order to fill this gap several efforts were undertaken to attract international sporting events to Qatar such as the IAAF International Track and Field Meet, the Qatar Tennis Open and the 2006 Asian Games. While large investments in such events led to the successful bid for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the development of cultural projects has also been important in attracting tourists, mainly transit passengers, as well as enhancing liveability in what used to be a rather monotonous urban landscape (Adham, 2008: 245).

The most notable project was the redevelopment of the traditional market area, known as Souq Waqif, followed by the Museum of Islamic Art, both of which were nominated and shortlisted for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2010 and became the new face of the historic city centre (Wiedmann, Mirincheva, and Salama, 2013). More recently, the Katara

Cultural Village was built along the first public beach in the north of Doha in order to combine cultural and leisure facilities. In 2010 the Qatar Museum Authority opened the Arab Museum of Modern Art in Education City. In the future, while some projects were put on hold for various reasons, projects such as the new National Museum, the Orientalist Museum and the Olympic and Sports Museum will expand and diversify the collection of cultural institutions. These cultural investments should be seen as both an attempt to establish tourism as an emerging economic sector and as a branding strategy to transform the image of Doha from a stagnant city into a vibrant tourist attraction.

Education and Science

Apart from stimulating the growth of new economic sectors by investing in infrastructure and tourism projects, the former Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and his wife Sheikha Moza bint Nasser initiated the development of educational and research facilities early on in order to build a foundation for a more diversified economy and offer opportunities for international education. Thus, in 1995 the Qatar Foundation was introduced as a non-profit organisation focusing on three pillars, namely, education, science and community development (Oxford Business Group, 2009: 23). Its first project was Education City, the development of which was launched on an area of 2,500 acres in the north west of the city in the late 1990s (Adham, 2008: 243). In order to attract high-profile universities, various investments were made such as the USD759 million in Cornell University in order to open a faculty in Doha (Miles, 2005: 21). Science and research are promoted by the subsidiaries of the Qatar Foundation, namely, the Qatar National Research Fund and the Qatar Science and Technology Park, the tax-free environment which has attracted global corporations such as EADS, GE and Microsoft (Qatar Science and Technology Park, 2012). The multi-billion-dollar investment in the Qatar

Foundation and its various subsidiaries is one of the particular cornerstones of the hub city vision due to the long-term nature of its plans to develop a society for future knowledge economies and to establish higher education as an important economic sector itself.

News and Media

One of the very early investment strategies to initiate the transformation of Qatar and its capital city into an emerging hub with international attention was the large-scale investment in Al Jazeera. The founding of Al Jazeera in 1996 altered the world perception of Qatar due to its role as a news provider from the Middle East. Despite the fact that the initial funds of USD137 million were provided by the Emir, Al Jazeera has always maintained that it maintains an independent editorial policy (Sakr, 2001: 58). This liberalised news network has influenced an understanding of Qatar as a progressive and politically engaged country in the Gulf. The idea of investing in such a large-scale broadcasting service supports the vision of becoming a global hub by attracting world attention. Often seen as controversial, the role of Al Jazeera in regional politics has led to increasing recognition of the small country of Qatar around the world. Large amounts of investment enabled the news agency to hire various high-profile journalists and thus establish a growing level of credibility. Despite the still open question of the extent to which Al Jazeera can be considered independent, it has had a major impact on the development of the media in the Middle East as the voice of the people instead of a pure reflection of political agendas (Rinnawi, 2006: 23). After all, Al Jazeera has influenced the general business climate and thus development dynamics by promoting a new image of Qatar as being liberal and open to future reforms.

The analysis of the responses of the interviewee experts reveals that they have identified public engagement and investment in real estate projects as the main factors affecting the recent urban transformation process (Figure 6.3). The subsequent construction boom has shaped contemporary Doha not only morphologically but also socio-economically due to the businesses and foreign workers that have moved there as a result. In regard to future development dynamics the interviewees are convinced that the government investments in infrastructure projects of approximately 200 billion US Dollars will play the most decisive role within future urban transformation processes during the next ten years (Qatar Financial Centre, 2014). Large scale projects, such as Doha Metro, will continue to attract businesses leading to a sustained growth rate. According to the interviewees the infrastructure projects are key to enhance urban qualities and thus the general attractiveness of the city, which is key to attract knowledge economies long term.

Figure 6.3: Questionnaire Results

I. Large-scale investments	Which public investments had the biggest impact on urban developments over the last 15 years?	I. Large-scale investments	Which public investments had the biggest impact on urban developments in the future?
A. Real Estate	40/50	A. Real Estate	31/50
B. Infrastructure & Services	31/50	B. Infrastructure & Services	42/50
C. Culture & Sports	29/50	C. Culture & Sports	33/50
D. Education & Science	29/50	D. Education & Science	38/50
E. News and Media	13/50	E. News and Media	13/50

The New Form of Urban Governance

Since the 1970s Doha has grown according to master plans designed by international consultants on behalf of the urban planning department of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture (MMAA), and were implemented as legal zoning plans. Although many adjustments were made to these plans in order to accommodate the unexpected speed of urban growth during the oil boom, the initial plans were followed to a large extent. They formed the basic urban structure of Doha that consists of a reclaimed Corniche and a network of ring roads around the city centre. The last master plan, known as the Physical Development Plan (PDP), was prepared during the 1990s. Although it is still used as the basis for general land use policies, its implementation in 1997 has had a rather limited impact on Doha's urban development because of the increasing influence of new public authorities and public-private partnerships (Adham, 2008: 237).

This merger of the public and private sectors was the direct consequence of expanding investments and the liberalisation of markets in order to increase urban growth rate. In order to develop Doha into a well-connected international hub, many projects were however initiated without being part of holistic development strategies. The resulting rapid urban growth challenged the existing administration within the public sector. Thus, urban governance was increasingly decentralised and case-by-case decision-making was followed instead of central planning (Salama and Wiedmann, 2013: 114). One of the main characteristics of urban governance in Qatar is the fact that leading families own a significant share of urban areas and thus control access to decision-making regarding new developments (Al Buainain, 1999: 405). The extensive investment of oil and gas revenues in local urban growth and the subsequently

high population growth rate have thus led to speculative tendencies and the rapid increase of land prices as well as large scale investments in new developments without following any regulations.

Based on the interviews with ten planners, four major factors within the public sector and its administration were identified, which drove the recent decentralisation of urban governance in Doha.

Staff Capacity Deficits

The new urban development strategies at the end of the 1990s and the subsequent investment pressure challenged a public administration that was not able to manage urban growth in this scale and manner. The limited staff capacity did not permit the urban planning department within the MMAA to coordinate urban developments by implementing new or adjusting existing plans in a very short period of time. In the past, staff was recruited mainly on the basis of administrative qualifications while international consultants were engaged to develop new policies and plans for implementation. This procedure of allocating key planning responsibilities to external consultants led to capacity deficits following accelerated urban growth and pressure from investors to challenge existing plans and policies.

Fragmented Organizational Structure

A further reason for the decentralisation of urban governance has been the absence of a coordinating and communicating central organisation, which is empowered to supervise the various departments and stakeholders on the basis of a transparent legal framework. While during the oil urbanisation developments followed a general pattern and thus governance was based on fixed procedures, the various investments in recent projects have led to an intense urban growth acceleration making developments more dynamic and complex. Many parallel developments were carried out without being centrally coordinated or assessed. Subsequently,

new departments and authorities were founded, such as Ashghal (the Public Works Authority), in order to coordinate certain aspects of urban development more efficiently. The result has been a fragmented organisational structure that makes case-by-case decisions based on immediate problem resolution techniques, when what is needed is an interconnected form of governance integrating all parallel developments on the basis of one holistic vision. While key stakeholders within the semi-public and private sector have become the main drivers of many new developments, the public administration and its various authorities have been degraded to task forces reacting to new realities rather than defining them. Thus, the lack of coordination between the various task forces has increased the general problem of the missing efficient organization in regard to responsibilities as well as legal frameworks needed for a best-practice form of urban governance.

Out-dated Plans and Policies

Due to the new situation of unprecedented amounts of investment being made in Doha's urban development, existing zoning plans that were developed on the basis of the Physical Development Plan during the 1990s have quickly become outmoded. Thus, existing land use and building regulations have lost the status of legally binding documents and have been treated in many cases as technical recommendations rather than development regulations. The most prominent example of this is the development of high-rise buildings in West Bay, where the original zoning plan restricted the maximum building height to eight floors. After a first adjustment to a maximum height of fifteen floors, the restriction was completely cancelled at the end of the 1990s, permitting unlimited heights (Salama and Wiedmann, 2013: 82). In other cases shopping malls were built in areas allocated to low-rise residential developments. Thus, the central control of urban development using land-use plans and zoning regulations has been rather

limited during the last fifteen years and that many decisions were rather isolated. These were often legalised by temporary permissions that allowed construction and which were usually not subsequently retracted.

Legal Rights of Master Developers

In addition to the fact that initial zoning plans have been bypassed in many cases, another phenomenon that decentralised governance was the rise of what is known as “megaprojects”. These projects are usually connected with the investment strategies and are thus in most cases joint ventures between the private and public sectors. The main public bodies involved are the Qatar Investment Fund, the Qatar Foundation, and their subsidiaries. Other holdings are initiated as single public-private partnerships, mainly on the basis of state-owned land and private investments. For all megaprojects, one master developer is created to coordinate the development and given extensive legal rights to develop and implement master plans for their projects without major approval from the ministry and its urban planning departments. Furthermore, impact studies about the effects of projects on environment and traffic are not carried out independently, but are instead part of the master planning process of the developer itself. Thus, these megaprojects are governed as “cities within the city,” with a relatively limited relationship to their surroundings, involving mainly infrastructural concerns. Major examples of these megaprojects are Education City and Msheireb, carried out by subsidiaries of the Qatar Foundation, and Lusail City by Qatari Diar.

Most interviewees shared the opinion that an inefficient organisational structure, in combination with a *laissez faire* attitude regarding existing policies, were the main factors for the decentralisation of urban governance in Qatar (Figure 6.4). Moreover, staff capacity deficits exacerbated and accelerated this process, particularly at the beginning of the construction boom.

The allocation of legal rights to master developers of semi-public holdings regarding the design and development of large scale projects was, however seen, as the smallest factor in spite of its indisputable role in decentralising urban governance.

Figure 6.4: Questionnaire Results

II. Urban Governance	What were the main causes of the decentralization of urban governance?
A. Staff Capacity	38/50
B. Organisational structure – Lack of coordination	43/50
C. Master Deveopers & their legal rights	29/50
D. Laissez-faire attitude regarding existing policies	42/50

The Impact on the Urban Structure and Build Environment

The five major investment strategies, in combination with a more decentralised decision-making process, have shaped a new urban structure and built environment over the last fifteen years in Doha. The construction boom led to unprecedented urban growth, which did not follow a holistic strategic plan and transformed previous urban morphologies. In this regard, we can distinguish five main aspects regarding Doha's contemporary urbanism.

Fragmented Development

The construction of large-scale projects by joint ventures between the private and public sectors has led to a focus on individual development sites of megaprojects rather than consolidation and cohesion within overall urban areas. Today, around six of these projects have been completed or are still under development, occupying more than 30 square kilometres.

Despite their large size most of these projects do not serve adjacent settlement areas with

services and infrastructure. This “island” approach to development has led to a general lack of land-use integration, creating long driving distances between residences and services. In addition to an absence of integration of land uses, projects have been built without taking into account their surrounding built environment or future urban areas under construction. The main reason for this lack of integration is the decision-making process itself, wherein the master plans of individual projects are approved without regulations of a central strategic plan regarding overall urban developments. Thus, many developments have been built without taking infrastructure into account and so have been completed before infrastructural networks have been established to serve them. The overall result is a rather fragmented structure of developments leading to a pattern of urban patchworks instead of cohesive and integrated urban areas (Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: Map of Current Megaprojects about here



Source. Authors

The Predominance of Urban Peripheries

Another aspect of contemporary urbanism in Doha is the lack of a defined urban structure consisting of centres and sub-centres. This circumstance is rooted in the fact that Doha's urban area has been growing exponentially toward the outskirts over the last decades without the guidance of plans for developing sub-centres. The establishment of "decentralised centralisation" has been further complicated due to a lack of public transport networks and thus no major junctions that would enable higher densities of residential and commercial use. In addition, the old city centre's previous function as a centre for commercial and public activities has been increasingly undermined by new shopping mall developments and business districts along the urban periphery. Despite redevelopments of the historic centre, large parts of Doha's central urban area are occupied by high-density residential districts for low-income groups. Today, three major shopping malls in West Bay, Al Duhail and Al Aziziyah can claim to be new city centres due to their role as the biggest shopping and leisure spaces (Figure 6.6). However, their exclusive retail and entertainment facilities exclude over 70 per cent of Doha's population. Lower social groups would still define the historic centre as the commercial heart and meeting point for their communities. In general, it can be observed that the lack of public transport and extensive social segregation between income groups have caused an urban structure of sprawling peripheries served by shopping malls and a high-density mixed-use down town area for low income groups.

Privatised Urban Landscapes

Another characteristic of Doha's contemporary urban development is the increasing privatisation of many urban areas due to megaproject developments by the private sector. In this regard, the Education City and Pearl developments are prominent examples of gated developments with limited public access. The privatisation of urban space is rooted in the nature

of megaprojects to be exclusive entities that set themselves apart from other urban areas in order to attract attention and thus investment. Gating and fencing are, moreover, based on the assumption that future communities would prefer a secure and exclusive living environment. The Katara Cultural Village is another example of a controversial development that has introduced the first “public” beach in Doha, which again is only accessible by entering gates and paying entrance fees (Figure 6.7). Public space has become commercialised and thus filtered and limited in its function to invite all social groups to interact. The Souq Waqif, one of the most prestigious developments in Doha, appears to be a public space but is actually managed like an open-air mall with limited access for low income labourers (Neue Zuercher Zeitung, 2011). Other public spaces such as Aspire Park, which is currently the biggest park in Doha, are not accessible by most inhabitants due to its remote location in a low density suburban area. Today, the Corniche can be considered to be the city’s main public space in traditional terms as it constitutes an accessible central area to be used by anyone at any time. Most parts of Doha’s urban area are, however, hidden behind borders in the form of walled compounds and villas in residential suburbs and by security gates and entrance fees in the case of megaprojects.

Emerging Contrasting Typologies

In addition to the fact that the decentralization of urban governance has led to the privatisation of urban areas, the previous urban morphology has been changed by higher building heights. The most prominent example is the Diplomatic District in West Bay, where more than 50 high-rise buildings have been built, of which 18 have a height of over 150 metres. This high-rise agglomeration has changed the morphology of contemporary Doha from a rather simplistic structure of a medium-high urban centre surrounded by low-rise suburbs to vertical developments with a new emphasis on the waterfront (Figure 6.6). The high-rise waterfront at

West Bay is to a large extent the product of public incentives that provided private investors with the prospects of ministries and other public or semi-public organisations occupying commercial high-rises as tenants in the future. Along the coast to the north, however, many high-rise and medium-rise developments arose out of speculation in the growing freehold-property market and the potential for selling seafront properties at higher prices. Today, although a variety of building typologies can be found along the coast and in megaprojects, in suburban residential areas the general use of low-rise buildings in developments has continued to contribute to the expansion of urban sprawl. The reasons for this are outmoded planning, cultural habits and problems with delay in the supply of infrastructure and services in relation to increasing built densities.

Figure 6.6: Waterfront High-rises in West Bay about here



Source: Authors.

Low Building Standards

The construction boom in Doha has created a high contrast between masses of poorly designed projects and those of exceptional quality in a small number of representative buildings or developments. This concerns both construction and design and has three main causes, namely, a need for a rapid supply of housing in order to accommodate the fast rate of growth, a lack of restrictions in the case of building regulations, and deficient standards within the construction

industry itself. One result is therefore catalogue designed residential typologies, mainly introduced by South-Asian and Chinese contractors, made of cement pre-fabricated elements, and assembled in a few weeks by poorly skilled construction workers with limited supervision. These instant buildings occupy large areas of new built settlements in the outskirts of Doha, mainly in the form of compounds. A generic appearance and the need for a high level of maintenance due to low-quality finishing and utilities are two main results. However, the lack of quality is not restricted to low-profile residential and commercial developments and can also be found in cases of exclusive projects, particularly when properties are sold on paper before they are actually built. A further problem is the common practice of choosing one major contractor and architectural consultant for an entire development complex, which can lead to monotonous and repetitive designs. Exceptions are landmarks, for example, the buildings of the Qatar Foundation and public museums as well as high-rise buildings and hotel developments, which were built by experienced and internationally renowned contractors. Today, the contrast between the mass production of buildings and the state-of-the-art design of individual landmarks has become a reflection of a segregated and fragmented urban development that is experiencing a continuous struggle to integrate quality within quantities.

The fragmentation of Doha's urban morphology has been identified by most interviewees as the main result of the recent construction boom (Figure 6.7). Furthermore, the missing structure of interconnected centres and sub-centres and the decreasing quality of construction is seen as a major effect of the recent form of urbanism in Qatar. The contrast between vertical and low-rise developments was rated as a less important side effect of recent development tendencies.

Figure 6.7: Impact of Investment Strategies on Urbanism

III. Urban Morphologies	What are the consequences for the current urban structures and build environment?
A. Lack of integration - fragmentation	47/50
B. No efficient structure of centres and subcentres	37/50
C. Typological contrasts – High & low rise	25/50
D. Conflict between quantities & quality – Poor construction in most cases	35/50
E. Privatised urban landscapes	33/50

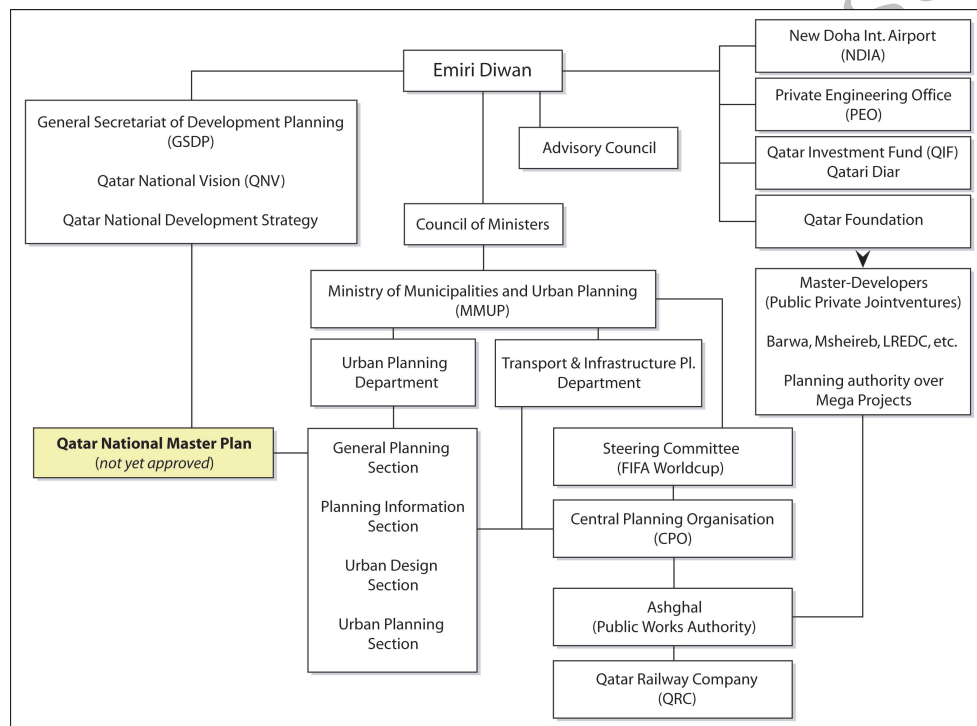
Toward an Effective Hub Vision

Large-scale investments initiated by Qatar’s ruling family have shaped contemporary Doha into one of the fastest growing cities in the world and a serious contender as an international hub in the region. The initial investments, however, followed no comprehensive strategy and were thus often carried out in a rather isolated manner from one another based on case-by-case decision making. In contrast to other Gulf cities the construction boom in Doha was mainly ignited by the investment of oil and gas revenues, which led to an on-going transformation process of urban morphologies. Today, Doha is experienced as being more and more diverse and contrasted, offering a state-of-the-art waterfront and various architectural landmarks. However, the overall urban structure is more and more dominated by the fragmented clustering of single “island” developments, which have to a large extent replaced the cohesive old urban centre. The absence of coordinated planning has led to a disjointed urban landscape requiring an efficient network of centres and sub centres. Thus, the main challenges today are to re-organise urban governance by implementing holistic strategic plans in order to increase urban consolidation on the basis of large-scale investments in infrastructure.

Recently, many attempts have been made to strengthen urban governance towards more flexibility and efficiency regarding the implementation of investment strategies. In 2008 the General Secretariat of Development Planning published the Qatar National Vision (QNV), which introduced capacity development programmes for the public sector in order to achieve socio-economic development goals for 2030 (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). The QNV is currently being implemented via a five-year plan known as the Qatar National Development Strategy (QNDS – see Chapter 3) in order to guide socio-economic development (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). Due to the subsequent restructuring process of governmental institutions, the MMAA was reorganised to become the Ministry of Municipalities and Urban Planning (MMUP) and the previously founded Urban Planning Development Authority was pulled back under the umbrella of the ministry in 2009. The main reason for this move was a general attempt at minor decentralisation by avoiding institutions existing outside the ministerial structure. And, in order to diminish the negative impact of a lack of coordination in the future, the Central Planning Organisation (CPO) was established at the end of 2011 to enhance communication and coordination processes between various parties involved and to supervise the phasing of parallel infrastructural projects. In addition to this reorganisation of urban governance, physical planning is expected to evolve positively when the Qatar National Master Plan is implemented as a holistic strategic plan in accordance with the development goals of the QNDS (Figure 6.8).

Figure 8: The New Form of Urban Governance in Qatar

The Qatar National Master Plan addresses the particular challenges of urban development in Qatar by introducing a comprehensive set of key development objectives, strategies and regulations. The Qatar National Master Plan is in line with the Qatar National Vision and contains two parts: the Qatar National Development Framework (QNDF) and the Municipal Spatial Development Plans (MSDP). The QNDF sets the strategic framework for sustainable



Source: Authors

development and establishes objectives, policies and implementation actions that must be followed by all government ministries and authorities. It therefore provides a disciplined framework for making spatial and land-use decisions to guide the development of Qatar until the year 2032 (Rahman, 2014: 82). Its main spatial strategy is the introduction of a transit-oriented

development based on a clear hierarchy of centres and sub-centres in order to reduce urban fragmentation and to integrate urban identity and diversity. The master plan has been elaborated by focusing on the macro-urban context and the main present challenge is its implementation in the case of specific areas and their development constraints. Thus, its future role in transforming Qatar's urban governance will depend greatly on the overall effectiveness, flexibility and transparency of its comprehensive legal framework, which needs to become the new basis of every decision-making process concerning any major urban development.

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